King Slaying Suspect Held Racist, Drug User

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Convicts who served time with James Earl Ray, the man wanted in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., have told authorities Ray was a racist and a habitual user of amphetamines while in prison, it was learned today.

Ray, object of a manhunt that extends as far away as Mexico and West Germany, served sentences in Illinois, California, Missouri and the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan. Some of his fellow prisoners have described him as an anti-Negro loner who spent much of his time in jail reading sex books and girlie magazines.

The FBI declined comment on the accounts of Ray as a racist and user of pep pills.

The FBI also had nothing to say about reports that his sister, Melba Ryan of Quincy, Ill., thought he might have gone back to Germany where he served part of his three-year Army hitch from early 1946 until he was given a general discharge in late 1948 for lack of adaptability to GI life.

Mrs. Ryan said her brother, now 40, thoroughly enjoyed his tour of duty in Germany. She thought it likely he might have returned there if he was trying to hide.

The FBI has printed thousands of wanted posters in Spanish fc distribution in Mexico wher Ray is known to have gone a some point after his escape o April 23, 1967, from the Missour State Penitentiary in Jefferso City.

Ray's far-ranging travels afte his escape is one of the major question marks facing investigators.

During the year from the date of his escape until April 4 when King was shot to death in Memphis, Tenn., Ray is said to have journeyed 19,000 miles.

He paid more than $2,000 for a white Mustang, took expensive lessons in dancing studios and bartending schools and traveled from Birmingham to New Orleans, to California, to Mexico, to New Orleans again, then to Atlanta, and finally to Memphis, investigators say.

He has been connected with the car and rifle believed to have been used by King's slayer by his fingerprints and is wanted by the FBI on a warrant charging conspiracy in the death of King as well as for being a fugitive from the Missouri prison system.

Investigators do not know how Ray financed his purchases, his day-by-day expenses or his travels without any known job during the period after his escape.

Investigators are hopeful that widespread circulation of his photos and fingerprints, plus the $150,000 in reward money offered for his apprehension, will lead them to Ray. Thousands of leads have been received and all are being checked out.